536 The theatre too has its votaries, and not only many prominent men of letters have contributed dramas and plays. but there are even some like M. Kostov, who devoted themselves exclusively to playwriting. The latter has won a well-deserved reputation as a comedy writer, which has transcended the narrow limits of his country, for such has been the success of his plays, that they have been translated into Rumanian and Serbian, and successfully staged both in Bucharest and Belgrade.

545 It would not be amiss to mention that the Bulgarians have succeeded in creating an opera and a theatre which compare very favourably with those of any of the larger provincial towns in western Europe, and this with an annual subsidy from the State of barely 12 million leva which is a most noteworthy feat. For a modest fee of one shilling, one may secure a most comfortable seat, and enjoy an excellent rendering of Wagner's Lohengrin, Verdi's Aïda, or Gounod's Faust, etc. It is regrettable that the best Bulgarian singers are often attracted by the lure of higher pay and appear more often in the opera houses of Prague and Paris, than that of Sofia, but the rendering of the choruses is always admirable. and compensates to a certain extent for the occasional absence of the protagonists. The staging too is perfect, and most modern, and is far ahead of what the average London theatre can offer.

532 In painting also, the Bulgarians have produced quite a number of really talented artists. The paintings of Mitov, Mirkvitska. etc were greatly admired at the Paris exhibition of 1900, and secured most flattering distinctions. It is to be deplored that few have kept to the real path of art and not gone astray allured by modern tendencies which have revolutionised artistic conceptions after the world war. Artists, like the portraitist Nicolaï Mihailov, who has not sacrificed his artistic convictions to these modern ideas has won a well-deserved international reputation